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Chairman's Message

Eric Buermann, Governing Board Chairman



It's construction time. That was the happy result of a Governing Board vote this month to award the first construction contracts for the C-111 Spreader Canal project, a key component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). Located west of Florida City in Miami-Dade County, the project was approved by Congress in 2000 and benefited from early state and District investments in land acquisition. It was an extremely upbeat moment for the Board this month to further build on recent Everglades restoration progress and approve contracts to begin construction of this important project that will benefit Everglades National Park and Florida Bay.

Florida Bay, one of our region's most scenic treasures, will be significantly improved by the project. The bay's vast, blue-green waters are dotted across 850 square miles with mangrove islands, sandy shallows, rich mudflats and submerged grasses. Fish, wading birds, dolphins, manatees and other aquatic animals thrive there, providing an important ecological and economic resource. More than 20 important species use Florida Bay as a nursery ground. Much of the bay falls within the borders of Everglades National Park, which will better retain clean water when the C-111 project is complete.

Superintendent of Everglades National Park, Dan Kimball, issued a formal statement shortly after the Board meeting, recognizing the importance of the District's contract approvals: "I would like to pass on our special thanks to the South Florida Water Management District governing board, management and staff for all their hard work in awarding this contract for the first phase of the C-111 Spreader Canal project. We are very happy to see this project begin as it represents a major step forward in Everglades restoration."

I couldn't agree more.

On a fiscal note, I want to share that the District's \$1.5 billion budget for fiscal year 2010 was approved and finalized by the Board at a special public hearing on September 22. The budget funds the agency's flood control and water supply missions as well as its continued progress to restore the South Florida ecosystem. A full 73 percent of the 2010 budget is dedicated to environmental restoration, from the *River of Grass* land acquisition and Everglades projects to Lake Okeechobee, Kissimmee River and coastal watersheds.

Taxpayers will appreciate that we have kept ad valorem taxes level for three consecutive years and that the District was again honored by the Government Finance Officers Association with a *Distinguished Budget Presentation Award*.

Fiscal responsibility while moving forward with Everglades restoration is a dual message that I am extremely gratified to deliver. South Florida's citizens deserve no less.

SFWMD Begins Project to Restore Florida Bay, Everglades

C-111 Spreader Canal project will restore freshwater flows to Florida Bay, preserve clean water for Everglades National Park



The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board awarded contracts to begin construction on the C-111 Spreader Canal project, representing another significant step for Everglades restoration. Key benefits of the project include restoring freshwater flows to Florida Bay, preserving clean water for Everglades National Park and maintaining flood control for eastern communities.

"Unwavering commitment to this project has brought us to the point where we will be able to significantly increase freshwater flows through Taylor Slough toward Florida Bay," said SFWMD Governing Board member Michael Collins. "The result will be tangible ecological benefits that will help restore and protect an integral piece of our ecosystem and economy."

The C-111 Spreader Canal project, located west of Florida City in Miami-Dade County, is a component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) approved by Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 2000. In 2004, the project became a part of the State's expedited efforts, supported by a total \$44 million investment to improve water quality and achieve restoration goals — \$30 million in construction and \$14 million in

land acquisition.

A central goal of the C-111 Spreader Canal project is to help achieve healthy salinity levels in Florida Bay by restoring the quantity, timing and distribution of freshwater flows via Taylor Slough to the bay ecosystem. Florida Bay is an integral component of the Everglades ecosystem and is a valuable economic resource for the region. A National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) study found that Florida Bay contributed approximately \$1.7 billion in the form of "destination spending" in 2003 alone.

Equally significant, the C-111 Spreader Canal project will help prevent clean water from seeping out of Everglades National Park through South Florida's porous underground rock layers. Preserving clean water significantly reduces the cost of treating and moving water into the park from other sources.

With the necessary federal and state permits in hand, the District Governing Board awarded contracts to build pump stations and other features for the project. Three Florida-based firms, Palm Beach Grading Inc., Wright Construction Group and GlobeTec Construction, were selected in a public bidding process. As part of the construction contracts, certified businesses in the District's Small Business Enterprise (SBE) program will participate in approximately 27 percent of the overall work.

"We are thrilled that this Everglades restoration project is moving forward," said SFWMD Executive Director Carol Ann Wehle. "The recent Everglades restoration construction agreement and financial commitments from our federal partners have made this a banner year for the Everglades and South Florida's environment."

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan is a framework for restoring, protecting and preserving the water resources of central and southern Florida. CERP is a 50-50 partnership between the State of Florida and the federal government. The State of Florida and the South Florida Water Management District have invested approximately \$2.4 billion toward this effort, including approximately \$300 million in construction. Through June 30, 2009, 59 percent — or approximately 230,000 acres — of the estimated lands needed to implement CERP have been acquired. For more information, visit www.sfwmd.gov/everglades.

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2010 Budget Reflects Continued Commitment to Ecosystem Restoration

\$1.5 billion budget dedicates 75 percent to restoration



At a public hearing on September 22, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board adopted a \$1.5 billion budget for Fiscal Year 2010 (Oct. 1, 2009 – Sept. 30, 2010). The annual budget funds the agency's flood control and water supply missions as well as its continued progress to restore the South Florida ecosystem, which includes America's Everglades.

"Because of this Board's commitment to sound fiscal management, we are able to carry out our core water management responsibilities for the District's 7.5 million residents, and, at the same time, we are able to move forward with the unprecedented opportunity to acquire land to revive the River of Grass," said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Eric Buermann.

The approved \$1.5 billion budget includes a significant investment in the environment: \$536.5 million in Certificates of Participation funding for the proposed initial acquisition of 73,000 acres of land from the United States Sugar Corporation for the purpose of Everglades restoration. As a result of this historic opportunity, a full 75 percent of the FY2010 budget is dedicated to this and to environmental restoration projects benefiting the Everglades, the

Kissimmee River, Lake Okeechobee and coastal watersheds.

The budget also provides for the District to begin work on or complete a host of other key projects to benefit South Florida's environment and residents including:

- \$152 million to expand Everglades water treatment areas, creating 11,473 acres of new treatment wetlands south of Lake Okeechobee to improve water quality.
- \$34.5 million to begin work on the C-111 Spreader Canal, a project to help restore Florida Bay and Taylor Slough, preserve clean water in Everglades National Park and maintain flood control for eastern communities.
- \$25 million for Kissimmee River Restoration land acquisition.
- \$42.3 million to design and construct the Lakeside Ranch Stormwater Treatment Area north of Lake Okeechobee to improve water quality in the lake.
- \$11 million for Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project construction to restore habitat and improve water quality in the bay and national park.
- \$8 million for the St. Lucie Watershed Protection Plan to improve water quality.
- \$3 million to complete dredging of Lake Trafford, helping to clean water flowing to southwest Florida.

The approved FY2010 budget reflects a \$65.3 million reduction in property tax revenues, in comparison with the current year. Additionally, the budget is in line with Governor Charlie Crist's direction to emphasize projects that are results-oriented and meet the planned, long-term needs of the region, with a goal to stimulate economic development in local communities.

The District's annual budget is funded by a combination of ad valorem (property) taxes, and by other sources such as federal, state and local revenue; licenses; permit fees; grants; agricultural taxes; investment income; and bond proceeds. About 30 percent of the total FY2010 budget comes from property taxes.

The approved tax rates, unchanged from Fiscal Year 2009, represent 62.4 cents per thousand dollars of value in 15 of the District's 16 counties (the Okeechobee Basin). For example, a home with a taxable value of \$200,000 (assessed value of \$250,000, minus the

\$50,000 homestead exemption) would see a total District tax bill of \$124.80. For Collier County and mainland Monroe County (the Big Cypress Basin), the tax rates represent 48.14 cents per thousand dollars. A similar home in this region would see a tax bill of \$96.28.

For the 17th consecutive year, the District has been recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) with its Distinguished Budget Presentation Award — the highest form of recognition in governmental budgeting. It is the highest honor bestowed by the GFOA. For FY2009, the agency received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award, and the budget was recognized as Outstanding as a Communications Device.

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Streamlined Web Site Set to Launch

www.sfwmd.gov will feature advanced technology to keep the public informed



The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is set to launch a redesigned and re-engineered Web site featuring easier navigation, exciting multimedia, powerful search tools and a host of high-tech improvements to make the site compelling and more useful for the public.

Scheduled to go live in November, the updated site was developed in-house to be the authoritative source of information about the District and the agency's primary line of communication with 7.5 million residents across 16 counties. The initial launch will feature approximately 60 pages highlighting the most timely and relevant water resource information. Additional pages will be transitioned into the new Web redesign through mid-2010.

Visitors to www.sfwmd.gov will continue to find a trove of water-resource based information such as:

The latest news, events, public meetings and webcasts.

- Water conservation tips, including landscape irrigation restrictions information.
- Weather radar and historical weather data.
- Lake Okeechobee's level and information.
- Recreational opportunities on SFWMD public lands.
- ePermitting.
- Information and progress reports about the District's ecosystem restoration projects, including Everglades restoration.

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District Recognized for Excellence in Procurement



The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has been recognized by a group of professional procurement organizations, headed by the National Purchasing Institute, with the Achievement of Excellence in Procurement award for work done during 2008.

"The District places great importance on how well we interact with the business community and how carefully we protect taxpayers' investment," said SFWMD Governing Board member Charles Dauray. "It is an honor to know that respected organizations within the procurement field believe we have achieved a level of excellence."

"The procurement professionals of the District constantly strive to meet our constituents' high expectations," said SFWMD Executive Director Carol Ann Wehle. "This award represents a significant accomplishment by this agency and its leadership team, and we are proud to have such talented professionals upholding the public's trust in administering our procurement efforts."

The award program is designed to measure innovation, professionalism, e-procurement, productivity and leadership attributes. Procurement practices at the District that contributed to the award include:

- Creation of a procurement ethics policy.
- Web-based direction on how to do business with the District.
- Formal satisfaction surveys of both internal and external customers.
- Web postings of all procurement activities.
- Online registration of vendors.
- Professional certification of procurement staff.
- Continuous training opportunities for internal customers and regular business-to-business meetings with external customers.

The South Florida Water Management District is one of 220 special districts in the United States to receive the award in 2009. The District has now been recognized with the award four times.

In addition to the National Purchasing Institute, the Achievement of Excellence in Procurement award is sponsored by the California Association of Public Purchasing Officers, the Florida Association of Public Purchasing Officers, the Institute of Supply Management, the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing, the National Association of State Procurement Officials, the National Association

SFWMD, Partners Work to Protect Loxahatchee River and Estuary

Ecosystem restoration, sewer system improvements will enhance water quality



The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board approved cooperative agreements that fund a suite of projects to restore and protect Florida's first federally designated "National Wild and Scenic River," the Loxahatchee River. The projects to benefit the river and estuary — spanning Martin and Palm Beach counties — consist of providing sewer service to 135 homes, restoring nearby ecosystems and improving stormwater management systems.

"The Loxahatchee is a unique and special place within our South Florida environment, and its future will be enhanced by the actions we take today to improve water quality," said SFWMD Governing Board member Patrick J. Rooney Jr. "These projects strengthen our commitment to protect this resource and provide real benefits to the river, estuary and residents."

The projects are part of the Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative (LRPI), supported by funding from the Florida Legislature. The goal of the intergovernmental effort is to preserve, protect and restore the Loxahatchee River and Estuary by improving water quality, controlling exotic plants and educating the public.

The approved projects, representing a watershed-based approach to Loxahatchee River restoration, include:

- **Loxahatchee River Neighborhood Sewer Upgrades:** This \$1 million project will provide regional sanitary sewer service to 135 homes in close proximity to the Loxahatchee River to reduce pollution. Located in the Town of Jupiter in Palm Beach County, within Pennock Point and Highlands neighborhoods, the project is a partnership between the Loxahatchee River District and the State of Florida.
- **Cypress Creek East Restoration:** This \$700,000 project will restore upland and wetland habitat in the eastern portion of Cypress Creek in northern Palm Beach County by removing exotic vegetation, planting native vegetation and reshaping portions of the landscape. Once complete, the project will improve wetland functionality by enhancing water storage and treatment to benefit water quality in the Loxahatchee River. A partnership between the Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management and the State of Florida, the effort will also help reduce the potential for saltwater intrusion.
- **Urban Stormwater Management System Rehabilitation:** This \$400,000 project entails reconstruction of swale systems in the northern part of North Palm Beach Heights in Jupiter to reduce nutrients in the Loxahatchee River and Estuary. The Town of Jupiter and the State of Florida are splitting the cost of the project.

The Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative was formed in 2000 to pursue funding for important projects. Funding sources include state appropriations administered by the District and local, state and federal funds from participating organizations. Partners have included Palm Beach County, Martin County, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Loxahatchee River District, the Town of Jupiter and the Jupiter Inlet District.

For more information, please visit the [Loxahatchee Estuary Overview](#).